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Country Justice, 15 min.	8	
Cow that Kicked Chicago, 20 m.	3 2	

T. S. DENISON & COMPANY, Publishers, 154 W. Randolph St., Chicago

DIVIDED ATTENTIONS

A COMEDY

BY
EVELYN SIMMS

AUTHOR OF

"Maidens All Forlorn," "A Packet for Popsey," "The Conspirators,"
"Hidden Harmonies," Etc.



CHICAGO
T. S. DENISON & COMPANY
PUBLISHERS

DIVIDED ATTENTIONS

CHARACTERS.

MRS. JENKINS *The Mother*
ESMERALDA CLARABELLE JENKINS.... *The Elder Daughter*
DOROTHEA HORTENSE JENKINS.... *The Younger Daughter*
CONSTANCE COMPTON *Joseph's Sister*
JOSEPH COMPTON *The Attentive One*

PLACE—*The Parlor of a Summer Hotel Anywhere in the
United States.*

TIME—*The Present.*

TIME OF PLAYING—*About Thirty-five Minutes.*

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TMP96-006783

OCT 11 1915

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COSTUMES AND CHARACTERS.

MRS. JENKINS—A stout, middle-aged, motherly woman. When she first enters she wears a bonnet and a handsome wrap; also gloves. Later she wears an extremely elaborate trained gown, out of place for afternoon wear.

ESMERALDA.—A young girl about nineteen years of age. She tries to assume dignity of manner and is quite dictatorial in dealing with her younger sister. Wears a simple afternoon dress which she later changes for a very handsome gown.

DOROTHEA—A girl of about sixteen years of age, bright and rather impulsive. At opening of scene she also wears a simple afternoon gown, which later she changes for a very elaborate silk dress.

MISS COMPTON—A simple, unaffected young woman. Wears a plain tailored suit and carries a small traveling bag and parasol.

MR. COMPTON.—An up-to-date young man. Wears plain street attire.

PROPERTIES.

Work bag, fancy work, cardboard bound manuscript tied with blue ribbons for Esmeralda. Work bag, fancy work, letter and a manuscript, the same as Esmeralda's for Dorothea. Fancy work for Mrs. Jenkins. Small traveling bag and parasol for Miss Compton. Writing materials for Mr. Compton.

STAGE DIRECTIONS.

R. means right of the stage; *C.*, center; *R. C.*, right center; *L.*, left; *R. D.*, right door; *L. D.*, left door, etc. The actor is supposed to be facing the audience.

DIVIDED ATTENTIONS

SCENE: *The parlor of a summer hotel. A door on the right leads into the hall and a French window (or a door) leads into the garden on the left. Between the door R. and the audience is a sofa, drawn slightly away from the wall so that anyone sitting there is in full view of the audience. There is a table in the middle of the room with a plant in the center and books arranged around it. A small writing desk is at the back. Other furniture suitable to a hotel parlor.*

ESMERALDA *is sitting on the sofa and DOROTHEA at the table as the curtain rises. Both are doing fancy work.*

ESMERALDA. And so, Dorothea, I said, "My! Mr. Compton, you don't mean it!" And he said, quite tender and deferential, so to speak, "My *dear* Miss Esmeralda, do I ever say things I don't mean?" So then, of course, I gave him one of my roses, since he wanted it so.

DOROTHEA. Goodness, Esmeralda, how you do talk! I suppose you think Mr. Compton never looked at anybody but you! Huh! You ought to have seen the way he looked at *me* last night.

ESMERALDA. A little chit like you!

DOROTHEA. Well, he did then! And what's more he put his name down for three dances on my program.

ESMERALDA. Yes, because *I* wouldn't give him any more, and of course he wanted to fill his program. Anyway (*triumphantly*), he took me in to supper.

DOROTHEA. Took you into supper! I guess he did! He's so kind-hearted he couldn't bear to see you left without a partner, so he generously sacrificed his own pleasure, seeing that I was going in with Sam Larks, and offered to take you. My! Didn't you tuck into those meringues?

ESMERALDA. I suppose you think that's funny, Dorothea Hortense Jenkins! Well, I don't. Some people have

a mighty high opinion of what they call their wit. *You may think you're smart, but that's more than anyone else does.*

DOROTHEA. I reckon you've spent the night in the knife-box!

ESMERALDA. I suppose you think that's a mighty cutting remark. But just let me tell you that it doesn't make any impression on *me*!

DOROTHEA. Hoighty-toighty! Miss Esmeralda Clara-belle Jenkins! You know you're just mad because you can't get the better of me. (*She rises and flings her work on to the table beside her work bag.*) Heavens! What a temper you're in! I'd be ashamed, Esmeralda, if I were you, to show my spite so openly.

ESMERALDA (*continuing to sew*). Huh! Jealousy!

DOROTHEA. Jealousy nothing! *I've got no cause to be jealous of you! Why, anyone could see that I'm the peach for him. (Walks to the French window and looks out, with head very erect.)*

ESMERALDA. You may be a peach, but allow me to tell you that you're a mighty sour one.

DOROTHEA (*turns and makes a face, then she looks once more into the garden. With a change of tone.*) Hello, here's Ma. Wonder where *she's* been? Hello, Ma! (*She waves from the window.*)

ESMERALDA. I wish you'd get out of the habit of calling Ma "Ma." It was all very well when we lived at the store, but now we've risen you might try and adapt your language to your position.

DOROTHEA. Gracious! Do you sleep with the dictionary under your pillow? Maybe that accounts for your hard-headedness.

ESMERALDA. H'm! Think that's smart?

MRS. JENKINS *enters from the garden, wearing a bonnet and a handsome wrap. She is middle-aged and stout, with a motherly and complacent expression. She drops heavily into the nearest chair, flinging back her wrap and beginning to untie her bonnet strings.*

MRS. J. Well, girls, you slept late after the ball. *I've* been up to town and back in spite of my late hours. And who do you s'pose walked with me part of the way?

DOROTHEA. Not Mr. Compton?

ESMERALDA. Oh, was it?

MRS. J. (*who has been taking off her gloves, blows carefully into each and puts them on the table*). Yes, my dears. Mr. Joseph Compton!

ESMERALDA. Oh, Ma!

DOROTHEA. Who's saying "Ma" now, I'd like to know. (*To MRS. J.*). Oh, Mamma, what did he say?

MRS. J. He spoke of the perfectly *lovely* time he'd had last night with you—

ESMERALDA. With me? Oh, the dear!

DOROTHEA. No, with *me*, wasn't it?

MRS. J. Now, honey, don't be hasty. He mentioned each of you with equal ardor. He said it was rare indeed to find such spontaneous friendship shown a man on such a short acquaintance, and he spoke most feeling-like of the politeness your Pa has shown him.

ESMERALDA (*sweetly*). Father, you mean, dear. And you should say feelingly, not feeling-like.

MRS. J. (*looking at ESMERALDA with pride*). Well, I guess you ought to know, for there's been a mint o' money spent on both of you, so's you might grace any rank to which fortune, in the shape of man, might call you. Why, I doubt if Mr. Compton himself is more cultured or well informed.

ESMERALDA. I guess *he's* one of the Four Hundred!

MRS. J. (*with conviction*). I should think it's more than probable. And he must be mighty rich, because he told your Pa—I mean Father—that he's going to buy a little place at Tankerville so's to be near his business and yet not have to reside in the city. Those were his very words. "And for the present my sister'll keep house for me," he said. (*Looks knowingly*.) Until, of course—! By the way, girls, he was going to meet his sister at the depot. She arrives today.

ESMERALDA. *What* a good thing we all came to this hotel.

DOROTHEA. But I'm sorry his sister's coming. She's bound to be in the way.

MRS. J. Why, no, honey, she won't. *I* think it's a real good thing. We'll just be as lovely as can be to her, and then she will tell her brother how charming you are. You don't know what it may lead to.

DOROTHEA. Things *seem* to be leading somewhere already, judging from last night.

ESMERALDA. He talked to me the most. Didn't he, Mamma?

MRS. J. He seemed considerably took with your conversation, I must say. Really, Esmeralda, your Pa and I would be mighty pleased to see you so well provided for. 'Twould be such a lift-up for us in every way, for although your Pa has retired and changed his residence, too, we ain't what you might call on the crest of the wave *yet*.

ESMERALDA. And you think the Comptons are?

MRS. J. I'm positive, honey. Why, the elegant way he expresses himself is quite sufficient to prove it. And I wish you could 'a seen the lovely top hat he had on *and* the buttonhole—a beautiful yellow rose. Why, Esmeralda, whatever is the matter?

ESMERALDA (*looking self-conscious and rather coy*). I—I gave him a yellow rose last night. Do you s'pose it was the same?

DOROTHEA. Great Scott, no! There's more than one yellow rose in the world. Do you s'pose he'd keep your faded old flower when he only asked you for it 'cause he knew you'd be mad if he didn't?

ESMERALDA. He didn't ask *you* for one, anyway.

DOROTHEA. He wouldn't have got one if he had.

ESMERALDA. Miss Sour Grapes!

DOROTHEA. It strikes me—

MRS. J. Girls! Girls! What would Mr. Compton say if he could hear you? You surely ain't jealous of each other, are you? He couldn't possibly fall in love with you both. I'm sure I don't know which he's after, but I guess your

chances are about equal. Of course, that yellow rose seems to incline your way, Esmie, and you being the eldest, too—

DOROTHEA. It ain't likely that an intelligent, good-looking young man like Mr. Joseph Compton would prefer age to beauty.

ESMERALDA. Seeing that I have both combined, the choice is easy—

MRS. J. (*interrupting with a gratified air*). My, Esmeralda, he must 'a' made considerable advances to you last night. I tell you what, my dear, if he *does* seem to favor you, you set your cap at him hard, for when once you are Mrs. Joseph Compton it will be easy to find a good match for Dorothea. (*Rises and looks critically from one girl to the other.*) Mr. Compton's sister will be here pretty soon. I should change, I think—put on something smart. It always pays. Dorothea, love, bring up my mantle for me. (*Exit MRS. J., R., followed by DOROTHEA, who turns and makes a farewell grimace at ESMERALDA as she goes out. As soon as she is alone ESMERALDA flies to the sofa where her work bag is lying, opens it and takes out with great care a manuscript bound in covered cardboard and tied with blue ribbons.*)

ESMERALDA (*holding it rapturously*). At last! (*She opens it carefully and reads aloud from the fly leaf.*) "To Miss Esmeralda Jenkins, with the compliments of Joseph Compton." (*She turns a page and reads.*) "The Unpublished Poems of Mr. Joseph Compton." Oh, how lovely! The yellow rose is *nothing to this!* (*She rises, turning the pages slowly, then begins to read aloud in a dramatic manner.*)

"LINES TO AN EVENING STAR."

"O, Star, who in the heavens beamest,
O thou who gently, sweetly gleamest
Shed thy fair rays on one who dreamest
Of thee afar.
Thy hov'ring spark of light thou sendest
On one who to thy sweet will bendest,
Whose heart in twain thy beauty rendest,
Sweet Evening Star!"

ESMERALDA. How simply heavenly! (*Turns pages eagerly.*) Why—why! “The Rose.” (*Reads aloud with self-conscious excitement.*)

“I begged for a flower; she gave me a rose;
Oh, would I could keep it forever.
But flowers all wither, as everyone knows,
Though the love that goes with them fades never.
She gave me a rose and I gave her my heart,
An exchange that’s of true love the acme;
For whatever misfortunes may fall to my part,
I’ll now have her true love to back me!”

ESMERALDA. And perhaps he wrote it before he sent the book this morning. (*She clasps the book to her heart, then puts it back into her work bag and laughs.*) Oh, Dorothea, if you only knew! (*Goes to door R., pausing with her hand on the knob.*) Esmeralda Clarabelle Compton! Esmeralda—Clarabelle—Compton!! A-a-ah! (*Exit.*)

Almost at the same instant DOROTHEA, in an elaborate silk dress, enters from the garden. She flies to her work basket on the table and carefully extracts from it a manuscript exactly like ESMERALDA’S. Then she sits down and turns the first page, reading eagerly.

DOROTHEA. “To Miss Dorothea Jenkins, with the compliments of Joseph Compton.” (*Turns next page and reads with admiration in her voice.*) “The Unpublished Poems of Mr. Joseph Compton.” Oh! the darling! (*Hugs the manuscript, looks through it and begins to read aloud.*)

“ON FEEDING A SPARROW WITH CRUMBS.”

“Come, oh, Birdie, Birdie, come;
Hop about from crumb to crumb,
Choose and eat them at thy will;
Here they lie upon the sill.
And be not afraid, for I
Will not let the cat come by
Till once more you gain the trees,
Nodding gently in the breeze.”

DOROTHEA. If that isn’t too cute for anything! (*Turns*

to index and reads titles.) "Ode to the Midnight Moon," "Lines to an Evening Star," "The Song of the Smothered Sigh," "Lines Inspired by a Grass Blade," "On Seeing the Lamps Lit Down the Road," "When First I Loved—" "When First I Loved—" Oh! (*Turns pages hurriedly.*)

"When first I loved I scarce knew what it meant;
Gently I laid my hand upon her arm,
And in the moonlight nearer her I leant,
Bewitched and spell-bound by her wondrous charm."

DOROTHEA. Oooo! (*Hugs herself with delight, then continues.*)

"We spoke of many things; I pressed her hand,—
And how I wished that it had not been gloved;
Yet still methinks that she did understand
All that I meant that night when first I loved."

(*She drops the book onto the table, clasping her hands rapturously.*) It's just what happened. He must mean me! And perhaps he wrote it before he sent me the book this morning! Oh, Esmeralda, if you only knew! (*Rises, replaces book in work basket and goes L., then turns, with rapt expression.*) Dorothea—Hortense—Compton! A-ah! Dorothea—Hortense—(*turns angrily as door R. opens and—*

MRS. J. and ESMERALDA enter. Both are wearing dresses much too handsome for the occasion.

ESMERALDA. How will I do, Mamma? (*Turns slowly around.*)

MRS. J. (*sitting down*). You look perfectly elegant. If only Mr. Compton could see you right now. (*ESMERALDA giggles.*)

DOROTHEA (*pushing forward*). How will I do?

MRS. J. You couldn't look better, love. I do wonder which of you girls it will be. (*Each looks triumphant without noticing the other.*) Now sit down and I'll give you a bit of advice. You be just as sweet and lovely as you can to Miss Compton. Tell her how nice she looks and what a good dancer her brother is. Make her feel

like one of the family. It'll all help. And let her know you've been to Europe, girls. The first impression *must* be a good one. And for goodness sake don't mention our ever having lived at the store. It just might make all the difference to her brother. You understand?

GIRLS (*together*). Yes, Ma.

ESMERALDA. I wish she'd come. (*Goes to window L.*)

MRS. J. For the land's sake, Esmeralda, be careful how you move around in that dress. I don't want to have you looking like a rag-bag when Mr. Compton's sister comes.

ESMERALDA (*excitedly*). They're just driving up. (MRS. J. and DOROTHEA *rush to the window.*) They've passed the corner. You can't see them now. (*With elation.*) You just ought to have seen him bow and smile. (DOROTHEA *tosses her head.*)

MRS. J. That was real exciting. But I never once thought of my dress. Dear, dear, I hope I haven't creased it. (*Sits down and begins to examine her skirt with apprehension.*)

ESMERALDA. I'm going to bring her in. She'll feel more at home. (*Exit R.*)

DOROTHEA. Cat! (*To MRS. J.*) For goodness sake, Mamma, put it down!

MRS. J. *arranges her train with studied carelessness and puts on her best society expression. The door R. opens and MISS COMPTON enters, followed by ESMERALDA. She carries a small traveling bag and a parasol. ESMERALDA speaks as they enter.*

ESMERALDA. You can't think how perfectly *delighted* we are to see you.

DOROTHEA (*taking MISS C.'s hand*). We've been simply *longing* to know you.

MRS. J. (*rising*). It's the greatest treat we've had for *ages*; ain't it, girls?

MISS C. (*shy but gratified*). I'm sure you're not more pleased than I am. As we were driving up just now Joe said to me, "You're going to call on the Jenkinses right away. *Lucky girl.*"

DOROTHEA. But where is he?

MISS C. Why, there was some mistake about the room Joe engaged for me and he's going to see about it before they take my baggage up. He's coming as soon as he can. He wants to see you all again *very* much. (*The two sisters smile to themselves.*)

ESMERALDA. Why, nobody's asked you to take a seat. Do sit down?

DOROTHEA. Yes, *do* sit down. (*Miss C. sits on sofa and ESMERALDA at once sits beside her, much to DOROTHEA'S annoyance. There is a slight pause. The two sisters, looking from each other to their mother and back again, begin to giggle. Both suddenly make an effort to say something.*)

ESMERALDA. Ain't—

DOROTHEA. Isn't—

(*Each waits for the other to continue and then giggles again.*)

MISS C. I beg your pardon?

ESMERALDA. I—I was only going to ask if this isn't a fine day.

DOROTHEA. I should think you could see that without asking.

MRS. J. (*reprovingly*). Dorothea! (*There is another awkward pause.*) How long are you going to stay here, Miss Compton?

MISS C. A few weeks, I reckon—until Joe has fixed on a house in Tankerville. How *fortunate* that Joe came to the same hotel as you all.

ESMERALDA. That's just what *we* were saying.

MRS. J. What a clever young man your brother looks.

MISS C. How sweet of you to say so. (*With pride.*) My brother writes.

DOROTHEA. How perfectly lovely! What does he write?

MISS C. Poems.

ESMERALDA. Fancy knowing a real live poet! Why I knew he must be somebody great the very first time I saw him. (*Begins to quote, as if absent-mindedly.*) "O star, who in the heavens beamest." (*DOROTHEA looks startled.*)

MISS C. Then you have seen his poems?

ESMERALDA. A few—by accident, so to speak. (DOROTHEA *looks suspiciously toward her work basket.*)

DOROTHEA. You must be mighty proud to own such a clever brother. I think he's just the finest fellow I ever met, and *so* kind-hearted. (*Quotes tenderly.*) "Come, oh, birdie, birdie, come." (ESMERALDA *looks amazed and suspicious.*)

MISS C. Do you also know my brother's poems?

DOROTHEA. I—er—yes—a few. (ESMERALDA *looks grim.*)

ESMERALDA (*to the visitor*). There's so much feeling in his poetry.

DOROTHEA. Such *tenderness*.

ESMERALDA. He shows such a love of nature, roses especially.

DOROTHEA. His verses are so *touching*—such subtle meanings—which only the truly sympathetic can *understand*.

MISS C. It's lovely to hear you speak so. He has to have a mighty high opinion of a person to send anyone his own verses. He must think a heap of you, Miss Jenkins.

ESMERALDA (*in a flutter*). Oh, do you think so? Oh, pray don't call me Miss Jenkins. If we are to get to know each other real well, you must at once commence calling me Esmeralda.

DOROTHEA. And call me Dorothea.

MISS C. Oh, you sweet girls! I should just love to. Then *I* must be Constance to you both.

ESMERALDA. What a *beautiful* name—Constance.

DOROTHEA. It suits you to *perfection*, Constance.

ESMERALDA. And now we're on personal subjects, may I tell you how perfectly elegant you look, dear?

DOROTHEA. I've never seen a lovelier costume—not even that summer we went to Europe. (*Glances at her mother, who nods approvingly.*)

ESMERALDA (*looking crushingly at her sister and then turning to Miss C.*). Let's go round the garden, dearest,

while they decide about your room. (*They rise and go L. DOROTHEA also rises.*)

DOROTHEA. I'm coming, too. Goodbye, Mamma.

MRS. J. Bye-by, honey. Don't be too long. (*The three girls go out L. MRS. J. sits doing some light fancy work, smiling. The door R. opens slowly.*)

MR. COMPTON. May I come in? (*His head appears round the door.*)

MRS. J. (*delighted*). Oh, do.

Enter MR. COMPTON, R.

MR. C. I thought my sister was here—and your daughters.

MRS. J. They've gone into the garden. What a sweet girl your sister is. My girls have quite lost their hearts to her already.

MR. C. (*sitting near her*). I shall be jealous.

MRS. J. (*playfully*). You've no cause to be jealous.

MR. C. It's mighty kind of you. (*Clears his throat nervously.*) Mrs. Jenkins, you—er—encourage me to take advantage of finding you alone to—er—ask you—something.

MRS. J. *Whatever* I can do, dear Mr. Compton, shall be done.

MR. C. There's a matter of great importance to myself I'd like to speak of, and I trust that you may be able to intercede on my behalf.

MRS. J. I'd be only too glad to intercede for you with anyone. And under the circumstances—

Enter ESMERALDA, L. MR. C. rises.

ESMERALDA. I *thought* I heard Mr. Compton's voice. Is your sister's room all fixed now?

MR. C. Quite. I expected to find Constance here and take her up.

ESMERALDA. She's with Dorothea in the garden. (*Sweetly.*) There's no hurry, is there?

MR. C. Why, no. I'll just wait till she comes.

MRS. J. (*rising with meaning look at ESMERALDA*). And I'll go and look for your pa—your father, dear. (*Exit R.*)

ESMERALDA (*clasping her hands*). Mr. Compton, I think your poems are just too lovely for anything. Although they only came this morning, I've read them *all*. I've even learnt one by heart *already*.

MR. C. How sweet of you! You make far too much of them. May I ask *which* you have learnt?

ESMERALDA (*looking down*). "The Rose"—

MR. C. Ah! I hoped you would read that.

ESMERALDA. Oh, Mr. Compton (*Archly*.) Did you really write that after last night?

MR. C. (*playfully*). You mustn't ask me when I wrote it. Dear Miss Esmeralda, I am so glad to have this opportunity of speaking to you. I have been wondering if you could spare me a few minutes to myself. I started speaking to your mother, but perhaps after all I'd do better to say it to you. It's about a very important matter—

ESMERALDA. Yes, Mr. Compton. (*Eagerly*.)

MR. C. Won't you sit down? (ESMERALDA *looks about, then crosses to sofa and sits down, looking at him invitingly. He sits beside her, looks at her in silence for a moment, then pushes back his hair and smiles. ESMERALDA casts down her eyes.*) It's been such a pleasure getting to know you all. And I—I suppose you are all agreeable to my friendship?

ESMERALDA. I—I almost feel as if Constance was a second sister. She's *so* sweet.

MR. C. That's real kind of you. (*Pauses.*) Dear Miss Esmeralda, this is what I wish to ask you. Would you—could you—do you think—

Enter DOROTHEA and Miss C.

MISS C. Oh, there you are, Joe!

DOROTHEA. We *thought* you were here as Esmeralda didn't come out again. (ESMERALDA *looks wrathful*.)

MR. C. We were just chatting till you came. (*To ESMERALDA.*) Well, we'll have to finish another time. (*Smiles.*)

MISS C. I suppose you've got my room fixed up now? (*To ESMERALDA.*) Will you come up with me and see it?

ESMERALDA. I'd love to. (*She frowns at DOROTHEA as she goes to the door. Exit R. with MISS C.*)

DOROTHEA. What a *sweet* girl your sister is. We already call her Constance, and she seems like an old friend.

MR. C. She's a lucky girl. (*They sit down.*)

DOROTHEA. And now that we are alone I want to thank you for your *beautiful* poems. I'm being very selfish about them for I haven't shown them to *anyone* yet. But I just wanted to enjoy them to the full first. They simply beat everything I've ever read.

MR. C. You are far too kind.

DOROTHEA. It's *you* who are too kind.

MR. C. Then I'm going to ask *you* to be kind now. (*She looks up with anticipation.*) Dear Miss Dorothea, I want to ask you if you will do something for me.

DOROTHEA (*with intense feeling*). Of course I will.

MR. C. It is really from your honorable and esteemed father that I must ultimately ask the favor, but—er—I don't think he would object to my speaking to you first. Do you, dear Miss Dorothea?

DOROTHEA (*looking down*). I'm *sure* he wouldn't.

MR. C. You—you—are quite sure?

DOROTHEA. *Quite* sure. (*Smiles at him.*)

MR. C. You must know that ever since I have been down at Tankerville I have—

Enter MISS C., R.

MISS C. Why, I hope I haven't interrupted you. (*To DOROTHEA.*) Esmeralda asked me to bring you up, too. We're planning to drive this evening and she wants your advice about going to the Falls.

DOROTHEA. My advice! Huh! (*Looks annoyed.*)

MISS C. Do come. She says you have been there oftener than she has and know better how to get there and where to go.

MR. C. We can continue our little conversation at the Falls, maybe. It's a real pretty place. (*Smiles.*)

DOROTHEA. All right, I'll come. (*Exit with MISS C., looking very cross. MR. C. walks around the room, hesi-*

tates, then sits at writing table and writes a note. Exit with note L.)

Enter ESMERALDA an instant later, R. She comes in eagerly and quickly, then looks around in great disappointment and stamps her foot. Then she crosses to French window L., looks out, calls "Mr. Compton" two or three times; crosses to door R., which she opens, glancing into the hall. Then she shuts door, returns to window and looks out, and finally stands in middle of room looking extremely angry.

Enter DOROTHEA, R.

DOROTHEA. Oh, yes, you thought you could hurry back to Mr. Compton once you'd got me started talking about that drive. A nice thing—sending for me like that because you were just jealous of my being alone with him. Well, he's gone now. So you had your trouble for nothing.

ESMERALDA. Why didn't you stay with Constance?

DOROTHEA. Because you're not the only one that can interrupt conversations. (*Comes nearer.*) I've a good mind to tell you a secret. Then you'll know your mistake.

ESMERALDA (*startled*). Well, what?

DOROTHEA. Of course, since you interrupted us like that, he hadn't time to finish. So it wasn't like an exact proposal.

ESMERALDA. Proposal! I should think not, Dorothea Jenkins. It's certainly time *I* told *you*. I've got a secret, too, Miss—a secret that *is* a secret, let me tell you.

DOROTHEA. Esmeralda Clarabelle Jenkins, don't you go and put your foot in it before you know what you're talking about. He said he was going to speak to Pa. What does that mean? Huh?

ESMERALDA. That he wanted you to be a sister to him, of course.

DOROTHEA. That question is soon settled. There's Pa in the garden now. I'm going to ask him. (*Exit L. ES-
MERALDA watches her, half angry, half amused. DOROTHEA
returns almost immediately with a letter.*) He's written to
Pa—written already. And Pa—I mean Father—said we

could read it. Now I hope you're satisfied. (*Takes letter from envelope.*)

ESMERALDA. I'm the eldest.

DOROTHEA. Yes, but I've got it. (*Begins to read. Her delighted look changes to one of agitation and dismay, at which ESMERALDA, watching her, laughs triumphantly.*)

ESMERALDA. Aha! You thought it was you! (*DOROTHEA looks at her in dismay and thrusts the letter in ESMERALDA's hands.*)

DOROTHEA. Here, read it. (*ESMERALDA reads and then her expression also changes. She drops the letter.*)

ESMERALDA. Of all ugly, deceitful things—

DOROTHEA. Of all the sneaky, underhand—

ESMERALDA. So the yellow rose meant nothing, nor the poems.

DOROTHEA. Did he send *you* a book, too? I thought you'd seen mine.

ESMERALDA. And I thought you'd seen mine. Oh, the ugly little whipper-snapper!

DOROTHEA. To think he should trade on our friendship in that horrid, ungentlemanly way. (*ESMERALDA suddenly takes manuscript from her work bag and tears it to pieces. DOROTHEA watches her, then drags her copy from her work basket and also tears it in small pieces.*)

Enter MRS. J. She looks at them astonished.

MRS. J. Why, girls!

ESMERALDA (*tragically*). Ma, we've got some news for you. Pa had a note from Mr. Compton just now.

MRS. J. (*delighted*). And *which* is it? He started speaking to me, only we were interrupted. And I've just met that sweet Constance. She wants us—

DOROTHEA. Never mind what she wants. We ain't going to do it. Ma, Mr. Compton wrote to ask Pa—

ESMERALDA (*interrupting*). He's *engaged*—to a New York girl, and he wants this fixed up before he gets married. So he wrote—(*chokes with anger*)—

DOROTHEA. To ask Pa to recommend him as manager

to the new firm of Dubbins & Sparks, men's outfitters, Tankerville! (*They stare at each other in furious amazement for a few seconds before—*)

THE CURTAIN FALLS.

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SYNOPSIS.

Act I.—A morning in June at Solitaire Villa, Dovecote. Mrs. Seltoon smooths out the course of true love. "Whoever heard of a grass widow playing a heroine in a love scene?" "Oh, it's one of the best things they do." Mrs. Seltoon seeking a man for her niece. "What is his yearly income?" The butler's opinion of a woman A. B. "Near-sighted, men's shoes, short bedrabbled skirts, last year's hat and a banner saying Votes for Women!" The new maid who is a graduate from the Splinterville Normal. The moving picture hero. "Women make me nervous. I always keep out of their way." Symptoms of hydrophobia. "I bark, low-wow-wow!" "His father is in oil and vinegar." "Is it a new kind of a bath?" Gail announces her engagement to the moving picture hero. "He's here in town!" "Fall, O walls, and crush me!"

Act II.—A dinner party. Ferdy decides to enlist in the army. A reconciliation. Abigail and Adrian Lee of the movies. "Those eyes, that nose, it's him?" "I've seen you propose in white flannels, in feathers, in full evening clothes, in a sailor suit, and in the garb of a monk, and every time you've won her in the end." Gail and her fiancée. That odious Mr. Trelford. Dinner is served. Vance Trelford learns that he is engaged. "I expected it all along." "Yes, I begin to think that I did it myself."

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SYNOPSIS.

An anxious hostess. Meely wants to serve winny-wurst sandwiches and noodle soup. The mystery of the jardeniere. The President arrives before she is expected. "It was her hair; she hadn't got it all on yet." Red flannels for the Hottentots in the middle of Africa. A stranger in town, the rich Mrs. Powers. A trip down town. Grandma Gibbs and her ear-trumpet. The rich Mrs. Powers is mistaken for the dressmaker. The meeting of the society. A little tiff. The giddy Miss Huggins is late as usual. A present from the men. "Sewing for the Heathen."

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